

**COVID-19 REPORT**

Ontario may see more than 80,000 more cases of COVID-19. Dr. Peter Donnelly, CEO and President of Public Health Ontario (PHO) gave a news conference at noon today. Of the 67 Ontario deaths from COVID-19, 16% are individuals who are 80 years and older. Numbers may vary. Data from PHO comes from the Integrated Public Health Information System (IPHIS). “Projections and modelling for a brand new viral disease are very inexact.” Ontario’s data reflects a shorter experience with the disease compared to the larger, international data.

The death toll in Ontario is predicted to be between 3,000 and 15,000. Without the current public health measures, deaths could be as great as 100,000. A “ring of steel” is required around long term care homes. Testing will be used “strategically to protect the elderly and the vulnerable”.

Residents must be assured of the best palliative care if they become sick. Because of staff redeployment, the bedside providers may need more guidance and supervision within the facility; more assistance by the NPs and physicians. Find out who in your community may provide palliative consultations. Palliative nurse consultants can provide virtual consults and assist both the clinician and bedside nurses. OTN eConsult is available for physicians. A call to the hospital switchboard may also be a means to contact consultants in palliative care. Future COVID-19 Reports will provide further recommendations for palliative and end-of-life care. Send your suggestions and experience to [office@oltcc.ca](mailto:office@oltcc.ca)

Our long term care residents are among the most vulnerable to die from COVID-19. The experiences at Lynn Valley Care Centre and Pinecrest Nursing Home show that dying patients are cared for at their home. Ontario Health released Clinical Triage Protocol for Major Surge in COVID Pandemic this week. The Protocol is attached to this report. The purpose of a triage system is to limit the morbidity and mortality for the overall population. The three ethical principles of triage are utility, proportionality and fairness. The Protocol outlines the eligibility for ICU. Relevant to the persons that we care for, are the exclusion criteria. In particular, criteria related to cognitive impairment and function—ability to perform activities of daily living.

The Clinical Frailty Score (CFS) is included with the Protocol. It is used as ICU exclusion criteria for the different levels of Triage. Current triage is Level 1 and excludes anyone with CFS of seven or greater. Level 1 excludes patients with greater than 80% mortality. Levels 2 and 3 exclude patients with greater than 50% and 30% mortality respectively. Cut-off CFS scores for levels 2 and 3 are five and three. Much more is included in our discussion of goals of care and transfer of care. Explaining the high mortality rates and wise use of resources is part of the discussion.

### Letter to Families

- “COVID-19 particularly serious in seniors, especially for those who have other medical conditions. If a senior does get sick from this virus, there is a much higher chance of dying from it, compared to a younger or healthier person.”
- “Doctors have learned that there is no benefit for seniors with COVID-19 to go to the hospital and they would not survive intensive care. As well, we have put in extra safe-guards to avoid transfers to ER for other non COVID-19 related illnesses as much as possible, to again try to lessen the potential for exposures.”
- “We want you to know that our main priority is to ensure that your loved one is comfortable and cared for throughout their illness if they were to become sick. Most symptoms are related to cough, fever and shortness of breath. Although there is no treatment for COVID 19, there are medicines and treatments for the symptoms that will be provided in the home and they will be provided with all fluids and nourishment for their comfort. Our nurses are very skilled in providing comfort measures, and a COVID 19 illness would be no different in that regard.”

The above is shared by Dr. Tracy Hughes, Medical Director at St. Andrew’s Terrace in Cambridge. The entire sample letter is attached and is provided to assist with your communication with families.